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A Memorial of Debbie E. Cope · 1904

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MEMORIAL.

The testimony of Birmingham Monthly Meeting of Friends, Pa., held Tenth Month 28th, 1903, concerning our beloved friend, DEBBIE E. COPE, *a minister, lately deceased.*

In issuing this testimony to the worth of our departed friend, with feelings of gratitude to our heavenly Father, who so clothed her with christian graces as to make her an ornament and blessing to the church, we desire to glorify only the giver of every good gift.

Debbie E. Cope was born Third Month 14th, 1833, in East Whiteland, Chester County, Pa. The daughter of David and Deby Cope, she found within her own home examples of cheerful piety and saw the way of holiness attractively presented. In that home were exhibited a warm and sprightly interest in young people, with an ability to gain their attention and open their hearts; a readiness to instruct by anecdote, counsel or reproof; a reverent love for the sacred volume, whose audible perusal was more than a daily feature; a firm belief that the doctrines and testimonies of Friends

were in accord with the truths of Holy Writ; and over all and through all, a sincerity and a humility that showed an abiding near the source of all good.

Our friend has left little on record concerning any event or circumstance of her life. Yet that she much appreciated the privileges of her home is apparent when we find her referring in later years to "the blessings"—to quote her own words in a letter to a friend—"the blessings falling upon the pathway of those children who have had God-fearing, God-loving parents, and who have been objects of tenderest solicitude; being brought before the throne of mercy through the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous, which availeth much.'

Amid these favored circumstances, supplied and blessed by a kind Providence, Debbie E. Cope appears early to have chosen the better part, and to have embraced the Truth from the love of it. She was a most affectionate and dutiful child, careful to do nothing to grieve her dear parents or her heavenly Father; and strengthened by his grace there seems to have been through life a gentle and beautiful spiritual growth—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." In her

search for truth it became her conviction that the christian life must be one of self-renunciation and of non-conformity to a worldly spirit. She was early led to deny herself gratifications in dress; in later years she has been heard to say in regard to some further sacrifice called for in this respect that she felt that "if she had been unwilling to yield to this requisition, she would have lost her hold on her best life;" and she continued to the last to feel it necessary to give to others—as she wrote the day before her death—"an outward evidence of the inward testimony we bear to the yoke and cross of Christ."

After the death of her father in 1864, she removed to Concordville, Pa., thence in 1869 to London Grove, Pa., to live with her uncle, Morris Cope. While here she was called more publicly to the service of her Master, and being not disobedient to the heavenly vision, she was recorded as a minister in the summer of 1881. She became a member of Birmingham Monthly Meeting, Twelfth Month 27th, 1893, having previously removed to West Chester. She was occasionally engaged in religious labor in various sections of our Yearly Meeting, and once attended Ohio Yearly Meeting with

the unity of her friends; but her service was mainly that called for in the attendance of her own and neighboring meetings, and in these she devotedly labored to the close of her life.

In her public offerings she was led to minister of the joy and blessing of a life dedicated to the service of Christ; to extend consolation to the afflicted, and loving invitations to the erring or halting; to plead for faithfulness in little things; and at times to refer with much feeling to the counsels of her precious parents. Little children and young people were dear to her, and in touching, earnest language she entreated them to be always obedient to the good Spirit speaking to them in their hearts, and loyal to our Society by upholding its principles in their fullness.

In our meetings for discipline the lively interest and religious feeling with which she entered into the affairs of the church were particularly useful. Very loving to the transgressor, very tender of the feelings of all, she was yet fearless and uncompromising in her advocacy of truth; and at times dangers before unseen or unrealized were laid before us. Especially was she exercised on the subject of pernicious amusements and places of diversion.

Though thus favored in her ministry, yet she knew how to be abased, to tread the low valley of humiliation. She wrote to a friend Sixth Month 11th 1894, "I expect all of us who have been called to the service of the ministry have to pass through very similar seasons of discouragement, and a sense of unworthiness. I do not want to shrink from any service, time, or place that the dear Master may call as his own wherein I must labor, but there are times when the lovely mornings on the First-day of the week dawn upon me, and I think of going to our place of worship, (that) the heart faileth."

In these words of our friend we discern, not the want of appreciation of a great religious privilege, but the sense of responsibility which pressed heavily upon her in view of the work to which she was called.

She says again, referring to important positions in the church, "The sense of unfitness for such positions is very humiliating; but it is a healthful condition to be found in; and thus the dear Master prepares the spirit for the service he designs for each. We each have the light of life given us, and walking in this in humility, faithfulness and obedience, under

the holy, peaceful influence of the dear Master's spirit, how he will keep us, bless us, prosper us, deepen us, it may be through means we would not choose for ourselves. But He knows best the dispensations needed to bring us just where He would have us be."

Her helpful ministrations however, were not confined to our meeting-houses or to formal religious occasions. She desired at other places and times to watch for little openings to show on whose side she was and to make gains for Truth. "While it is well," she said, "to spread our religious views before the world in divers ways as they open, there is no stronger evidence borne than the daily life of that Christian who walks in the way cast up for us as a people."

In her daily life Debbie E. Cope was eminently social, and cheerful in disposition and conversation. Possessing also a candor and sweetness peculiarly her own, her winning, sympathetic manner, drew others to her, and to the cause she loved.

The fruits of the Spirit were manifest particularly in the universal love which seemed as a well spring from the fountain of love, and which as in her public ministry so on social

occasions flowed out to those in trouble or in physical suffering. In the home of the aged and by the bed of sickness, she was a frequent and comforting visitor. She was often led to express in private her interest in those passing through exercises of spirit, and extend encouragement to them; and we believe her faithful service in this way has been blessed to many. But this love was given none the less to the happy, and to the young; nay, it was offered especially to the young and to those of small religious experience. And it did not stop here, but like the love of her Saviour, it went further, and as she once expressed herself in private conversation, "Friends, I can't help loving sinners." Yet the sinfulness of sin much oppressed and grieved her.

She was for a number of years an interested helper on the Westtown and Indian Committees. She was also a member of the committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting Fourth Month, 1902, to visit subordinate meetings. Entering on this appointment with her usual zeal and diligence, she labored faithfully in her line for three months, when an alarming illness made it necessary for her to withdraw n the work. She in part recovered from

this attack and was able to attend again her own particular meeting. On the last First-day of her life she had a tender message for the large company assembled at the meeting-house in West Chester, especially addressing the young, whose welfare continued to lie so near her heart.

During the evening of that day she wrote to a friend, "I have felt amid all that has been meted out to me of suffering and anxiety that 'God is good,' and have desired for myself and others that the needful preparation for the spirit's departure may be perfected in us and that through mercy we may be safely gathered to the haven of unending rest and peace." And in a letter written the following day she said, "Numbering the blessings, I try to lie passive in His hands and know no will but His." Only a few more hours of thankfulness and childlike trust were granted; then with little warning, but with much calmness, and in full consciousness of the approach of death, on the morning of Tenth Month 14th, 1902, her spirit passed through mercy, we reverently believe, "to the haven of unending rest and peace."

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